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from view in an unstretched condition a plurality of elastomeric polyurethane microfilaments that are shorter than and less bulky than said non-elastomeric microfilaments, said elastomeric polyurethane and non-elastomeric polypropylene microfilaments originating from a common multicomponent fiber having elastomeric polyurethane and non-elastomeric polypropylene components which split upon thermal activation, and the weight ratio of the non-elastomeric polypropylene microfilaments within the fiber bundle is substantially identical to the weight ratio of the non-elastomeric polypropylene component within the multicomponent fiber.

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30. (Twice amended) A fabric comprising a plurality of bulked plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments substantially surrounding and covering from view in an unstretched condition a plurality of elastomeric microfilaments that are shorter than and less bulky than said non-elastomeric microfilaments, said elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments originating from a common multicomponent fiber having elastomeric and non-elastomeric components, wherein said elastomeric polymer has a solubility parameter (δ) sufficiently different from said non-elastomeric polymer so that said elastomeric component and said non-elastomeric component split upon thermal activation and further wherein the weight ratio of the non-elastomeric microfilaments within the fiber bundle is substantially identical to the weight ratio of the non-elastomeric component within the multicomponent fiber.

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48. (Twice amended) A splittable multicomponent fiber comprising:
at least one component comprising an elastomeric polymer, at least a portion of which is exposed to the outer peripheral surface of said fiber, which is elastically deformed so that said elastomeric component is capable of substantially complete recovery to its original length upon release of drawing tension; and
at least one component comprising a non-elastomeric polymer, at least a portion of which is exposed to the outer peripheral surface of said fiber, which is plastically deformed and longer than said elastomeric component upon dissociation therefrom so that said non-elastomeric

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component maintains substantially its same length after drawing upon release of drawing tension,

wherein said elastomeric polymer has a solubility parameter (δ) sufficiently different from said non-elastomeric polymer so that said elastomeric component and said non-elastomeric component split upon thermal treatment and said elastomeric and non-elastomeric polymer components are arranged in distinct unocclusive cross-sectional segments so that the polymer components are not physically impeded from being separated from one another.

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56. (Amended) The fiber of Claim 48, wherein said fiber is a pie/wedge fiber.

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59. (Twice amended) A fabric comprising a plurality of splittable multicomponent fibers comprising at least one component comprising a non-elastomeric polymer and at least one component comprising an elastomeric polymer, wherein at least a portion of each of said non-elastomeric and elastomeric polymer components is exposed to the outer peripheral surface of said fiber, wherein said at least one polymer component comprising a non-elastomeric polymer is plastically deformed and longer than said elastomeric component upon dissociation therefrom so that said non-elastomeric component maintains substantially its same length after drawing upon release of drawing tension and wherein said at least one polymer component comprising an elastomeric polymer is elastically deformed so that said elastomeric component is capable of substantially complete recovery to its original length upon release of drawing tension and release of adhesion to the non-elastomeric component;

wherein said elastomeric polymer has a solubility parameter (δ) sufficiently different from said non-elastomeric polymer so that said elastomeric component and said non-elastomeric component split upon thermal activation and said elastomeric and non-elastomeric polymer components are arranged in distinct unocclusive cross-sectional segments so that the polymer components are not physically impeded from being separated from one another.

63. (Amended) A fiber bundle comprising a plurality of bulked plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments substantially surrounding and covering from view in an unstretched condition a plurality of elastomeric microfilaments that are shorter than and less bulky than said non-elastomeric microfilaments, said elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments originating from a common multicomponent fiber whose cross section consists of contiguous segments of elastomeric and non-elastomeric components, wherein said elastomeric polymer has a solubility parameter (δ) sufficiently different from said non-elastomeric polymer so that said elastomeric component and said non-elastomeric component split upon thermal activation and after separation the elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments can be recombined to cumulatively define the approximate cross section of said multicomponent fiber.

64. (Amended) A fiber bundle comprising a plurality of bulked plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments substantially surrounding and covering from view in an unstretched condition a plurality of elastomeric microfilaments that are shorter than and less bulky than said non-elastomeric microfilaments, said elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments originating from a common multicomponent fiber having elastomeric and non-elastomeric components, wherein said elastomeric polymer has a solubility parameter (δ) sufficiently different from said non-elastomeric polymer so that said elastomeric component and said non-elastomeric component split upon thermal activation and further wherein said elastomeric microfilaments have substantially the same denier as said non-elastomeric microfilaments.

65. (Amended) A fiber bundle comprising a plurality of bulked plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments substantially surrounding and covering from view in an unstretched condition a plurality of elastomeric microfilaments that are shorter than and less bulky than said non-elastomeric microfilaments, said elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments originating from a common multicomponent fiber having elastomeric and non-elastomeric components, wherein said elastomeric polymer has a solubility parameter (δ)

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sufficiently different from said non-elastomeric polymer so that said elastomeric component and said non-elastomeric component split upon thermal activation and further wherein the denier of said fiber bundle and the denier of said multicomponent fiber are substantially identical.

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Please add the following new claims:

67. The fiber bundle of Claim 17, wherein the number of elastomeric microfilaments is the same as the number of non-elastomeric microfilaments.

68. The fiber bundle of Claim 17, wherein said elastomeric microfilaments and said non-elastomeric microfilaments have substantially the same denier.

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69. The fiber bundle of Claim 28, wherein the number of elastomeric microfilaments is the same as the number of non-elastomeric microfilaments.

70. The fiber bundle of Claim 28, wherein said elastomeric microfilaments and said non-elastomeric microfilaments have substantially the same denier.

71. The fabric of Claim 30, wherein the number of elastomeric microfilaments is the same as the number of non-elastomeric microfilaments.

72. The fabric of Claim 30, wherein said elastomeric microfilaments and said non-elastomeric microfilaments have substantially the same denier.

73. The fiber of Claim 48, wherein the number of elastomeric components is the same as the number of non-elastomeric components.

74. The fiber of Claim 48, wherein the weight ratio of said component comprising an elastomeric polymer is the same as the weight ratio of said component comprising a non-elastomeric polymer.

75. The fiber of Claim 48, wherein said fiber is a segmented round fiber comprising a plurality of polymer components comprising an elastomeric polymer alternating with a plurality of polymer components comprising a non-elastomeric polymer.

76. The fiber of Claim 48, wherein said fiber is a segmented oval fiber comprising a plurality of polymer components comprising an elastomeric polymer alternating with a plurality of polymer components comprising a non-elastomeric polymer.

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77. The fiber of Claim 48, wherein said fiber is a segmented rectangular fiber comprising a plurality of polymer components comprising an elastomeric polymer alternating with a plurality of polymer components comprising a non-elastomeric polymer.

78. The fiber of Claim 48, wherein said fiber is a segmented ribbon fiber.

79. The fiber of Claim 48, wherein said fiber is a segmented multilobal fiber.

80. The fiber of Claim 79, wherein said segmented multilobal fiber comprises at least three arms formed of said non-elastomeric polymer extending outwardly from a central region of said fiber formed of said elastomeric polymer.

81. The fiber of Claim 79, wherein said fiber has a cross cross-sectional configuration.

82. The fabric of Claim 59, wherein the number of elastomeric components is the same as the number of non-elastomeric components.

83. The fabric of Claim 59, wherein the weight ratio of said component comprising an elastomeric polymer is the same as the weight ratio of said component comprising a non-elastomeric polymer.

84. The fiber bundle of Claim 63, wherein the number of elastomeric microfilaments is the same as the number of non-elastomeric microfilaments.

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85. The fiber bundle of Claim 63, wherein said elastomeric microfilaments and said non-elastomeric microfilaments have substantially the same denier.

86. The fiber bundle of Claim 64, wherein the number of elastomeric microfilaments is the same as the number of non-elastomeric microfilaments.

87. The fiber bundle of Claim 65, wherein the number of elastomeric microfilaments is the same as the number of non-elastomeric microfilaments.

88. The fiber bundle of Claim 65, wherein said elastomeric microfilaments and said non-elastomeric microfilaments have substantially the same denier.
